

MURDER FACTORY FOUND IN BAVARIA

Few Nazis Among Germans on Staff That Hid Activities Until Three Days Ago

KAUFBEUREN, Bavaria, July 4 (Reuter)—A wholesale extermination plant in which hundreds of men, women and children—all Germans—allegedly mentally defective or physically deformed, were killed by intramuscular injections or slow starvation was operating here until two days ago, it was disclosed today.

The ghastly system was uncovered by two American doctors, Maj. Marvin Linick of New York and his assistant, Capt. Loyal S. Murphy of Memphis, Tenn., both members of the Munich military government's public health office. Eighteen American soldiers who accompanied these investigators were so outraged by what they saw that they volunteered to serve on an execution squad for those culpable.

The plant functioned in this town, sixty miles southeast of Munich, and virtually every inhabitant of Kaufbeuren was aware of the fact that human beings were being used as guinea pigs and systematically butchered. The perpetrators or passive collaborators were in no way conscious of a sense of guilt. With few exceptions they were Germans who were not Nazi party members. Some were Catholic sisters and nurses.

Chief Nurse Killed 210

The chief nurse confessed that she had murdered "approximately" 210 children in two years by intramuscular injections. She asked her captors simply: "Will anything happen to me?" The chief doctor was captured and his second in command hanged himself the night before the investigators arrived. Another sister confessed with a stony grin that she had poisoned "at least thirty to forty persons."

The plant, which operated under the title of a "lunatic asylum," had a maximum capacity of 3,000 persons and received its orders from the German and Bavarian Ministries of the Interior. Experiments were made there "for the improvement of the race."

Starved bodies that had been living beings less than twelve hours before the American investigators arrived weighed about sixty pounds apiece. A village boy selected at random was asked what the buildings were and he said casually: "Oh, that's where they kill them."

Signs Hid Activities

"Out of bounds" signs and "lunatic asylum" notices abounded and concealed the work of extermination for many weeks after the Americans had taken the town. Observers found a 10-year-old boy weighing twenty-two pounds. His calves were 2½ inches in diameter. Scabies and lice were rampant and quarantine was non-existent. The investigators were not convinced that all the patients were completely mad, as some, on seeing the staff pushed aside by the Americans, laughed at their changed status.

The head nurse, Sister Woerle, who confessed killing 210 minors, drew a monthly bonus of 35 marks for her added grisly task. Sister Olga Rittler, who grinned when confessing killing between thirty and forty persons, was asked

whether she believed in God. She answered: "I am a Lutheran and this is a personal matter that does not concern you."

The primary methods of extermination practiced in Kaufbeuren and its branch institute in Irsee were scientifically directed starvation and the administration of chemicals. Those to be starved were divided into two categories, those receiving a rapid starvation diet and those receiving slow starvation. The former died in about three months while the latter took considerably longer.

Poisoning was handled by injections and by doses given in food, death occurring after two to five days. The patient normally contracted a lung ailment or pneumonia, which was usually given as the cause of death on certificates sent to relatives. Sturdier patients received overdoses of the poisons.

The drugs were received directly from Berlin. The patients came from all parts of Germany and in the files were pitiful letters of inquiry from relatives. It was the institution's custom to telegraph the next of kin shortly before the killings that the patient had taken a turn for the worse. Several days later they would receive intimation that the patient had died and been buried in the Kaufbeuren cemetery or cremated in the institution's huge crematorium. The total number of victims "treated" in the institution and its branch cannot be estimated, as all papers were burned before the arrival of the investigators, but figures were obtained showing a mortality rate of 25 per cent last year.